GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEFENCE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:367
ANSWERED ON:10.09.2007
Menace of HIV/AIDS in Defence Forces
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Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether HIV/AIDS is spreading in Defence forces for which WBS, APCS and BSF were compelled to join hands to spread awareness among jawans;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government to control the damage;

(c) whether there is any plan to bring changes in the service rules like increasing leave, reducing job stress and to provide family quarters; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 367 FOR ANSWER ON 10.9.2007.

The incidence of HIV positive cases in the Armed Forces during the last 5 years has shown declining trend from 501 cases in the year 2001 to 377 cases in 2006.

The Armed Forces Medical Services have an elaborate HIV/AIDS control programme, which includes the following:

(a) Health education of the troops and their families.

(b) Surveillance of High Risk Groups such as blood donors, patients of sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis patients, ante natal cases, personnel proceeding abroad in peace keeping missions and returning from there.

(c) Hundred percent screening of all ante natal cases.

(d) Hundred percent screening of all blood/blood products for HIV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, Syphilis and Malaria.

(e) Encouraging voluntary ounselors and testing.

(f) Spreading awareness about HIV/AIDS through audio-visual means.

The Armed Forces Medical Services are running a comprehensive prevention and control programme for HIV/AIDS in close coordination with the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) and United Nations AIDS Programme (UN AIDS).Assistance of West Bengal State AIDS Prevention and Control Society (WBSAPCS) and Border Security Force (BSF) has however, not been sought.

A system of educating and counsellors on stress related issues already exists in the Defence Forces. This includes increased formal and informal interaction between senior and junior officers, strengthening time tested reporting and feedback system in the unit, using services of psychiatrists and counsellors to conduct lectures/presentations and educate officers/personnel; identifying personnel under stress and carrying out psychological conditioning and counselling of identified individuals.

With a view to further improving the service conditions of the Armed Forces personnel, Government has also approved the following measures:

(i) Officers have been assured time scale promotions up to the rank of Colonel (Time Scale), thus increasing the promotional avenues and enhancing the satisfaction level.

(ii) Grant of additional rail warrant to all ranks of the Armed Forces serving in field/high altitude/counter insurgency/ counter terrorism

operational areas.

(iii) Removal of restriction of 1450 Km for availing Leave Travel Concession (LTC) and rationalization of LTC entitlement of officers and Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR) making them similar.

(iv) Grant of High Altitude (uncongenial Climate) (HA[UC]) Allowance at enhanced rate to troops deployed at more difficult, hazardous and isolated areas within the existing (HA[UC]) Area.

(v) Leave regulations have been liberalized where necessary.

(vi) A married accommodation project has been undertaken for providing adequate residential/married accommodation for Defence Service personnel. Besides, provisions also exist to hire married accommodation.When an individual is posted to field area, separated family accommodation is also available at various stations.